



corkscrew road rural community

committed to preserving our safe and quiet neighborhood

Paul Souza, Acting Field Supervisor
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
South Florida Ecological Services Office
1339 20th Street
Vero Beach, FL 32960

September 20, 2006

Dear Mr. Souza,

I am a resident of the community of Corkscrew in southeast Lee County. I am writing in support of the recent request from the National Wildlife Federation and Florida Wildlife Federation urging FWS to closely review Lee County mining applications that have been submitted by Estero Group LTD, Resource Conservation Holdings LLC (Corkscrew Excavation), and Golf Rock LLC. I also ask that you consider the proliferation (see attached map) of other rock and fill mine excavation operations being proposed in this area with respect to cumulative impacts to habitat preservation, expected increases in incidental taking, and continued survival of listed species as it relates to the Endangered Species Act.

The Corkscrew area represents one of the few remaining communities in south Lee County where native protected lands and adjacent compatible private land uses like low-intensity agriculture and low density rural residential combine to provide wide-ranging foraging and traveling routes for listed species such as the Florida panther. On June 16th, my family and I personally observed a large uncollared panther crossing Corkscrew Road at the same location where one was subsequently killed by a truck on August 24th. I've also personally observed wood storks, crested caracaras, sandhill cranes, burrowing owls, gopher tortoises, an eastern indigo, roseate spoonbills, white ibis, and fox squirrels on or near all three properties applying for mining permits in this area. Like most Corkscrew residents, I appreciate the value of wildlife habitat, and the critical role this resource represents to the continued survival of the species we enjoy seeing in our own backyards every day.

Currently, there is a single active fill dirt mine operating on east Corkscrew Road. On any given day of operation, this mine contributes as many as 1200 truck trips per day to this two lane arterial collector road with an average total traffic load of 3800 vehicles per day. The three proposed mines, if approved, would increase this heavy industrial truck traffic by 400% or more and would result in permanent loss of nearly 2000 acres of secondary habitat that is critical for a viable panther population.

In addition to these pending applications, other landowners along Corkscrew Road have stated their intentions to apply for mine excavation permits. A project named Cypress Bay intends to mine their property with a footprint of 1152 acres. Schwab Materials is suing Lee County under the Bert Harris Act after being denied a permit to mine on 640 acres. If they settle, they may be allowed to mine their property without further public input. Six-L's Farms is also reportedly investigating a mining operation on their 5120 acres. Please refer to the attached map for spatial reference to the properties proposing to excavate mines. From a landscape systems perspective as it relates to habitat protection, conversion of land use to mining at the scale being proposed in southeast Lee County is completely contrary to preserving lands essential to the long-term viability of listed species already present in the area.

I urge you to closely review the situation in southeast Lee County and carefully consider the requests and recommendations made by the National Wildlife Federation and Florida Wildlife Federation in their letter to you dated 9/14/2006. Thank you for your kind consideration in this matter. If I can be of any assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin U. Hill". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kevin U. Hill
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